

Chicago, IL - During a tour of the Shedd Aquarium's new Invasive Species exhibit, Congressman Mark Kirk announced plans to introduce legislation when Congress reconvenes January 31 to stop invasive species from entering the Great Lakes. Kirk's legislation will require all vessels equipped with ballast water tanks, including vessels that are not even carrying ballast water, to flush and clean their tanks before entering the Great Lakes.

"Contaminated ballast tanks are responsible for releasing invasive species into the Great Lakes," Congressman Kirk said. "Whether these tanks are filled with ballast water, or only contain contaminated residue, they need to be cleaned to remove threats to the Great Lakes ecosystem."



Currently, only vessels actually carrying ballast water are required to flush their water before entering the Great Lakes. The flushing of ballast tanks with sea water is said to reduce the invasive species threat by 90 percent. But most of the vessels that enter the Great Lakes have no ballast on board, meaning their tanks have only contaminated residue and can pass into the Great Lakes without their tanks being cleaned. Kirk's legislation would set a six month deadline for the Secretary of Homeland Security and the Coast Guard to issue regulations on the flushing of all ballast tanks entering the Great Lakes.



Kirk's legislation comes as the Shedd Aquarium opens their new Invasive Species exhibit to expand public awareness about aquatic invasive species in the Great Lakes. Their exhibit will

allow the public to get a close look at some on the invasive species threatening the Great Lakes ecosystem. Some of the invasive species exhibited are the asian carp, zebra mussel and the round goby.

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